**Your Stewardship Toolkit for December 2023!**

*This month’s message:* **Rediscover Advent for a Holy Christmas**

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Good, thoughtful, consistent communication, education and action will help your congregation develop a healthy culture of stewardship and generosity. This kit is designed to help get you there!

You can use the resources of this kit by themselves to educate and encourage stewardship, but they would be more effective as a monthly emphasis that lifted up a different aspect of stewardship. You could plan bible studies, temple talks, a preaching series, and other activities.

Here’s what you’ll find below:

* **Stewardship Snippets:** Put a “Stewardship Snippet” every week in your Sunday bulletin! It’s a quote from the week’s Revised Common Lectionary lessons, followed by a brief reflection. Just cut and paste!
* **Newsletter Article:** Publish something in your newsletter every month on stewardship and faith or post it on your website. Keep your people thinking about stewardship. Just cut and paste!
* **General Resource Websites:** – These are places you can go for inspiration and great ideas!

**Stewardship Snippets**

*Copy and paste into your bulletin!
Source: Rob Blezard*

**December 3, 2017** (1st Sunday of Advent, Year B)

*“Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.”* **–Isaiah 64:8**

Knowing that we are creations of God helps shape our self-identity. But Isaiah adds a wrinkle: we are clay that God, the potter, shapes and forms. As good stewards of our lives, we prayerfully and eagerly invite the Holy Spirit to help us discern how God wants to mold us. The closer we are to who God means us to be, the happier and more fulfilled we are.

**December 10, 2017** (2nd Sunday of Advent, Year B)

*“Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.”* **–Psalm 85:8**

Are you listening for what God is saying to you? To your congregation? All of God’s people? It’s hard to hear anything with the anxious noise of the world. Living right, we turn away from the noise and listen for God’s word of peace. And we live it!

**December 17, 2017** (3rd Sunday of Advent, Year B)

*“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.”* –1 Thessalonians 5:16-19

Ever notice how some people are always complaining, even when their lives seem (to us, anyway) to be pretty blessed? They aren’t living right and being good stewards of their gifts. By contrast, these short verses from 1 Thessalonians give sage advice – Rejoice! Pray! Give thanks! That IS the will of God for you!

**December 24, 2017** (4th Sunday of Advent, Year B)

*[The angel Gabriel said to Mary,] “Nothing will be impossible with God.*"**–Luke 1:37**

Fear is a big part of our modern life. How would you live if you had no fear? Gabriel’s words to Mary are his words to us today: Nothing is impossible with God. So, stop fearing, have faith, and live!

**December 31, 2017** (1st Sunday after Christmas, Year B)

*“When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.  The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.”***--Luke 2:39-40**

Stewardship of faith involves showing up, doing the right thing, and taking care of responsibilities. Joseph and Mary practiced this by fulfilling God's law for their son Jesus. Why not make 2024 a year to develop good, consistent stewardship practices all year long?

**Newsletter article – 260 words**

*Just copy and paste into your newsletter! Use this or one from the* [*newsletter archive*](https://thestewardshipguy.com/newsletter-articles/)*.*

**Rediscover Advent for a Holy Christmas**

*In accordance with Jesus’ promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish.* **-2 Peter 3:13-**

With fighting in Israel and Ukraine, political gridlock in the U.S., worsening climate change around the world, and other deep problems, 2023 is ending on a sad note for humanity.

That’s a good reason to rediscover Advent this year. Lost amid the nonstop commercialism of Christmas, Advent is the church’s traditional season of careful preparation and waiting – two things our instant, “have-it-now” culture abhors.

If we don’t prepare our hearts and minds for the miracle of Jesus – Emmanuel, God with us – how will Christmas be anything more than just another secular shopping season? How can we expect the arrival of Christ to give us strength, courage, insight and wisdom to deal with these troubled times?

Embracing Advent helps us to be good stewards of the Christmas season by reminding us that it’s not about Santa Clause or shopping or parties, but by the miracle of God arriving in human form to save us from ourselves.

Here are some ways to rediscover Advent:

* Find – and follow – an Advent devotional.
* Increase your disciplines of prayer, scripture reading, and worship.
* As much as possible, hold off celebrating Christmas until December 25.
* Remember we need Christ to live fully as God intended.

Advent prepares us to receive Jesus with a full and joyful heart, to live in the abundance Jesus promises.

*--Rob Blezard*

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[*Click here*](https://thestewardshipguy.com/about-me/) *for a complete and up-to-date bio for Pastor Blezard.*

**General Stewardship Resource Websites**

[**Stewardship of Life Institute**](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org/)– Headquartered at United Lutheran Seminary, this site has a trove of resources in areas of congregational and personal stewardship. (<https://www.stewardshipoflife.org/>)

[**ELCA Stewardship Resources**](http://elca.org/stewardship)– Our denomination’s deep well of materials. (<https://www.elca.org/stewardship>)

[**The Episcopal Network for Stewardship**](https://www.tens.org/) – Solid resources! (<https://www.tens.org/>).